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ABSTRACT

A method for volunteer teachers to help students set learning objectives in a home-based English-as-a-Second-Language program for native Spanish-speakers is presented. The philosophy is that in this kind of learning program, real-life language situations are most appropriate for language study and mastery, and that those situations are best chosen by the students themselves. The method involves asking questions of the group as a whole concerning English language use, and difficulties, goals, and personal interests. Each student responds in turn to each question, and responses are recorded. Themes are then extracted from the responses and prioritized by the group. A planning form is included. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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SETTING AN AGENDA FOR STUDY IN HOME-BASED ESL CLASSES WITH NATIVE SPEAKERS OF SPANISH

by David Spener

This document was written for use by volunteer ESL literacy teachers working in Washington, DC with the Spanish Education Development Center's project called **INGLES EN SU CASA** (English at Home). It describes how teachers can conduct bilingual (Spanish-English) discussion workshops where Spanish-speaking students choose the situational and thematic content to be included in the core syllabus for their ESL classes. The format described was used by the author with the classes he taught for **INGLES EN SU CASA** in 1988-1989. It does not represent official policy or practice at the Spanish Education Development Center.

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INGLES EN SU CASA

SETTING AN AGENDA WITH YOUR GROUP

In learning and teaching English, there are some things that everybody must learn regardless of their life situation. These are the "fundamentals" of the language--its grammar, spelling, pronunciation, et cetera. For each group and individual, however, it is still necessary to choose real-life language situations to study and master in English. The philosophy of INGLES EN SU CASA is that these situations can in most cases best be chosen by the students. In this way, the teacher can be sure that the content material of the class is relevant to the lives of her students. The following is an activity to help you and your group chart a course for the content material to be covered in your class.

As a group, consider the questions below. Write each question in Spanish and English on a separate sheet of newsprint and tape the sheets to the wall where everybody can see them clearly. Beginning with the first question, ask each group member the question individually and write her name and response on the newsprint beneath the question. If another person has the same response, add his name to what was already written. When everybody has spoken, continue on to the next question. The same situation may be named as a response to more than one question.

1. **¿Dónde y con quién es que Ud. usa el inglés para comunicarse?**
   Where and with whom do you currently use English?

2. **¿Dónde y con quién es que Ud. urgentemente necesita usar el inglés para poder comunicarse?**
   Where and with whom do you urgently need to use English?

3. **¿Cuáles son las situaciones diarias en que Ud. tiene más dificultades por no saber inglés?**
   What are the daily situations with which you have the most trouble because you don't know enough English?

4. **¿Qué es lo que a Ud. más le interesa aprender en este grupo sobre los Estados Unidos? Puede ser algo de la vida diaria, las costumbres, la historia, el gobierno, las diferentes gentes del país, las leyes, cualquier cosa.**
   What do you most want to learn about the United States? It might be something about its daily life and customs, its history, its government, laws or its different peoples, anything you're interested in.

5. **¿Tiene Ud. algo especial, algún interés que Ud. desee estudiar como parte de su participación en este grupo? Por ejemplo, algo relacionado con su trabajo o con una diversión que tenga. ¿Qué será?**
Is there anything special, some personal interest, that you would like to study as part of your participation in this group? An example would be something related to your occupation or a hobby you might have. What would it be?

ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES FOR THE GROUP'S STUDY AGENDA

As a group, look at the responses to questions 1, 2, and 3. Together, you need to decide which situations are most important for the group to study as part of the English class.

Look at the answers to the different questions above. Identify the situations that appear under more than one of the questions. Situations where English is already being used, where its use is urgent, and where lack of English proficiency makes the situation especially difficult are possible priorities for the group. Copy these responses on a new sheet of newsprint.

¿Cuáles son las situaciones que se repiten bajo más de una pregunta? O sea, ¿cuáles son las situaciones donde alguien ya usa el inglés, donde su uso es urgente, y donde la falta de inglés dificulta mucho? Hagamos una lista.
(What situations are repaeated under more than one question: In other words, which are situations where English is used already, where its use is urgent, and where lack of English is causing the most problems? Let's make a list.)

Now look at the possible priorities. For each situation, discuss whether each situation is something experienced currently by the majority of group members. Then discuss whether or not the group feels that the situation is something worth spending time studying in class. If the situation is not experienced by the majority of people in your group, and/or the majoirty of members don't think it's worth spending class time on, cross it off the list of priority items for the agenda.

¿Cuántas personas aquí experimentan esta situación actualmente? ¿Vale la pena estudiarla en la clase? Por qué?
(How many people here experience this situation currently: Is it worth spending time studying it in class? Why?)

Look at the remaining situations. These will become the core of the group's initial "syllabus". As a group, decide upon the order of situations to consider. Number them.

¿En qué orden debemos tocar estos temas en la clase?
(What order should we follow for these themes?)

Now that you have chosen the priority situations for the group to study and have ordered them, you are ready to prepare the agenda document for your group. Use the attached form. Responses for questions 4 and 5 do not need to be prioritized for the group. Explain that things to study about the United States will be for enrichment and that you will be preparing materials and activities to complement the group's "core" agenda. Individual interests will be worked on individually with the instructor. Photocopy the document and give it to your students to keep and consult.

When you have filled out the agenda document, call INGLES EN SU CASA's teacher trainer to set up an appointment to identify activities an materials to implement your group's agenda.

PLAN DE ESTUDIO

ESTUDIANTES:

PROFESOR:

SITUACIONES PARA ESTUDIAR EN INGLES

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

HISTORIA, CULTURA, Y GUBERNACION DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

INTERESES PARTICULARES

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.